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SKETCHING AND THE ACQUISITION OF TASTE:
WORDSWORTH, REYNOLDS, AND SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

Abstract

Using evidence from the unpublished correspondence of Sir George Beaumont, this essay establishes that the patronage, friendship, and eventual collaboration between Beaumont and William Wordsworth were rooted in a shared appreciation for the moral and aesthetic principles articulated in Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art*. While Beaumont's commitment to Reynolds's teaching is known to have guided his patronage and collecting, the influence of Reynolds on Wordsworth has received little sustained attention. The essay argues that central concepts from the *Discourses* are complexly entwined with Wordsworth's thinking about the acquisition of taste. Wordsworth and Reynolds were both committed to the refinement of the nation's taste and placed 'mental labour' at the centre of that process. While Reynolds excluded sketches from this scheme, Wordsworth crafted literary 'sketches' that encouraged the exertion of the requisite 'mental labour'. At a time when William Gilpin's essays and guidebooks had popularized picturesque sketching, Wordsworth shifted 'sketching' away from its associations with dilettantism, easefulness, and levity by (paradoxically) infusing the genre with Reynoldsian dignity and difficulty. As Beaumont produced paintings to accompany Wordsworth's poems he began to develop what he called a 'sketcheresque' style, which combined his commitment to Reynolds with a new admiration for Wordsworth's 'sketches'.

In 1811, at the request of his friend and patron Sir George Beaumont, William Wordsworth composed an inscription memorializing Sir Joshua Reynolds which concludes thus:

Hence on my patrimonial Grounds have I
Raised this frail tribute to his memory,
From youth a zealous follower of the Art
That he professed, attached to him in heart;
Admiring, loving, and with grief and pride
Feeling what England lost when Reynolds died.¹

The poem, written in Beaumont's voice, is a departure from the lyric introspection and humble subject matter that dominate Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* and *Poems in Two Volumes*. As such, it might serve to suggest that an increasingly conservative poet, past his 'Great Decade', had begun to yield to an influential patron. After all, the poem was written under Beaumont's supervision, inscribed on a cenotaph erected on Beaumont's Coleorton Estate in Leicestershire, and first published in a collected edition dedicated to Sir George. Beaumont offered patronage to artists including John Constable and Benjamin Robert Haydon; he was a friend of picturesque theorists William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, and a supporter of poets including Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He was, therefore, closely involved in shaping the nation's taste and his collection of paintings later became the foundational core of the National Gallery.² In all of this, Joshua Reynolds was Beaumont's guiding light: his commitment to Reynolds's practical and conceptual precepts is encapsulated in David Wilkie's testimony that Sir George was 'the only one left among us of the school of Reynolds' of what 'must now be called the golden age of British art'.³ While it would be inaccurate to describe Wordsworth as 'From youth a *zealous* follower of the Art | That [Reynolds] professed', Reynolds was more important to Wordsworth than is often appreciated.⁴

In *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), William Hazlitt describes Beaumont's influence on Wordsworth's mature style in terms of visual art. Wordsworth's 'classical and courtly' productions, which are 'polished in style', seem to Hazlitt to 'have been composed ... among the half-inspired groves and stately recollections of Cole-Orton': for Hazlitt, 'the perfection of the finishing' gives poems such as *Laodamia* (composed 1814) a 'glossy brilliancy' and the 'texture' of Wordsworth's thought takes on 'the smoothness and solidity of marble'.⁵ Given that Reynolds established precise 'finishing' as one of the most laudable principles of painting and declared sketching (which is associated with roughness and imprecision) a violation of 'a very fixed and indispensable rule of our art', it appears that Hazlitt pinpointed an element of Reynolds's classicism that he saw as having reached Wordsworth's poetry via Sir George.⁶ Yet Hazlitt's description of this shift towards a 'polished' style fails to acknowledge the artistic reciprocity between Beaumont and Wordsworth; it also indirectly raises questions concerning the poet's thinking about 'sketches'.

This essay seeks to establish that the patronal relationship and eventual collaboration between Wordsworth and Beaumont flourished in the context of shared respect for the moral and aesthetic principles articulated in Reynolds's *Discourses*.⁷ In particular, Wordsworth's conception of a literary 'sketch' was (somewhat paradoxically) underpinned by values he had in common with Reynolds. An examination of Beaumont's unpublished letters reveals that as he produced paintings to accompany Wordsworth's poems he began to develop a less highly polished 'sketcheresque' style in apparent defiance of his mentor. Wordsworth admired Reynolds's contribution to debates concerning the development of the nation's taste; within this context I suggest Wordsworth did indeed feel 'what England lost when Reynolds died'.⁸

'A Work of Time'

Reynolds's *Discourses*, delivered to students and faculty members at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790, maintain it is 'an absurdity' to suppose that the ability to appreciate good art is innate (II. xv. 206–7).⁹ Wordsworth shared Reynolds's belief that the nation's taste was in want of refinement and that such refinement could only be attained through hard work. The 'Advertisement' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) announces that 'An accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition'. Wordsworth was concerned that if readers had not bestowed 'much time' on poetry their 'judgement may be erroneous, and that in many cases it necessarily will be so'; he therefore aimed 'to temper the rashness of decision'.¹⁰ According to Reynolds's thinking, the best proof of the excellence of *Lyrical Ballads* would be general disapproval since certainly 'the lowest style will be the most popular, as it falls within the compass of ignorance itself'. It is for this reason that Reynolds warned his students 'not to be tempted out of the right path by any allurements of popularity, which always accompanies the lower styles of painting' (I. v. 141–2). Not expecting immediate admiration, Wordsworth appealed to Reynolds's authority in order to warn readers not to trust their instinctive responses to his and Coleridge's poetic 'experiments'.

Sir George and Lady Beaumont were not among that mass of readers liable to make these 'erroneous' judgements. In July 1803 (just before Wordsworth's first meeting with the Beaumonts), Coleridge reported that their impression of *Lyrical Ballads* made them 'half-mad to see you': after reading 'Cape Rash Judgement' Lady Beaumont confessed that 'had you [Wordsworth] entered the room, she believes she should have fallen at your feet'.¹¹ Sir George's first act of patronage that summer was the gift of a piece of land at Applethwaite near Keswick, which he gave with the hope that Wordsworth and Coleridge might 'live in

that blessed vale together till not a “mountain rears its head unsung” around you’.¹²

Beaumont’s attachment to the Lakeland landscape and impression of ‘the harmony, kindness of heart, & ardent desire to communicate pleasure which prevails in [the Wordsworth] family’ drew him towards the poet.¹³ As Wordsworth and the Beaumonts became more familiar, however, Wordsworth began to share with them specific details about his poetic ambitions, which further secured their admiration.

When *Poems, in Two Volumes* received scathing reviews in 1807, Lady Beaumont responded with a declaration of allegiance. Wordsworth attempted to make her as ‘easy-hearted’ as he was by explaining, in a letter of 21 May, that ‘this opposition is nothing more than what [he] distinctly foresaw’.¹⁴ The tastes of the reading public would have to be refashioned before his poetry could be fully appreciated:

never forget what I believe was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste; but for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy, and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work *of time* (*MY i.*, 150).

Wordsworth was convinced that such ‘an entire regeneration’ would be morally and socially beneficial; the ‘destiny’ of his poems was ‘to console the afflicted, to [make] the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age, to see, to think and feel, and

therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous' (146). Moreover, he was sure that Lady Beaumont would 'share with [him] an invincible confidence that [his] writings ... will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier' (150).

Although the taste he wished to create was new, the principles behind Wordsworth's endeavour were not. Reynolds's seventh *Discourse* argues that 'Men's minds must be prepared to receive what is new to them. Reformation is a work of time. A national taste, however wrong it may be, cannot be totally changed at once' (I. vii. 238). Reynolds was also committed to the moral force of art, teaching that '[w]ell-turned periods in eloquence, or harmony of numbers in poetry, which are in those arts what colouring is in painting, ... can never be considered as of equal importance with the art of unfolding truths that are useful to mankind, and which make us better or wiser' (I. vii. 216). By appealing to the imagination, an artist can 'raise the thoughts, and extend the views of the spectator', the 'effects' of which 'may extend themselves imperceptibly into publick benefits, and be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste'. Such refinement disentangles 'the mind from appetite ... till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exulted and refined, conclude in Virtue' (II. ix. 8). The highest purpose of art, for Reynolds, is the 'unfolding' of truths that promote virtue and (as John Barrell demonstrates) the creation of a community of taste is the main unifying principle in his writings.¹⁵

Beaumont's long-standing agreement with Reynolds that the 'reputations of both poets & painters invariably find their level in a century, or a century & half' is contained (for example) in a letter to William Gilpin of 4 September 1802, where Beaumont recalls that 'Sir Joshua says it was not till he had repeatedly considered the works of Raphael that he felt the full force of their merit'.¹⁶ Wordsworth was well aware of his patron's 'great regard for Sir Joshua': when Beaumont sent him a copy of Edmond Malone's edition of Reynolds's *Works*

(1801) in 1804, it was on account of this knowledge that Wordsworth took ‘great pleasure’ in reporting his approval of those parts of the *Discourses* that ‘relate to general philosophy’.¹⁷ Thus, with its Reynoldsian inflection, Wordsworth’s letter to Lady Beaumont of 21 May 1807 is perfectly pitched to soothe the Beaumonts’ anxiety and cement their loyalty.¹⁸ The letter does not mention Reynolds explicitly, yet Beaumont detected the allusion. In October 1807, writing in defence of Wordsworth’s genius, he took the poet’s phraseology and framed it with reference to the *Discourses*:

Sir Joshua says well that the highest efforts of art in all directions afford pleasure only to highly cultivated minds, and Coleridge that all great & original poets must create the taste by which they are to be relished as far as they are great & original—this requires much time & accordingly all real poets have slowly proceeded to their level.¹⁹

Given that ‘Reynolds’s teaching lay behind almost all Beaumont’s patronage and collecting’, Sir George could not but admire and support Wordsworth’s plan to regenerate the nation’s taste.²⁰ Given Wordsworth’s pre-existing adherence to some central aspects of the *Discourses*, the Coleorton inscription memorializing Joshua Reynolds does more than show a poet yielding to his patron: it enshrines mutual beliefs. Wordsworth did not adopt or feign sympathy with Reynolds under Beaumont’s influence; rather, Wordsworth’s own commitment to Reynolds’s ideas helped secure the relationship.

Sketching and Mental Labour

Wordsworth further explains his conviction that ‘every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed’ in the ‘Essay, Supplementary to the Preface’ (1815).²¹ He notes that, as a metaphor, ‘TASTE’ has been ‘taken from a *passive* sense of the human body, and transferred to things which are in their essence *not passive*’, that is, ‘to intellectual *acts and operations*’. This is lamentable, Wordsworth argues, because to modify taste involves more than ‘the mere communication of *knowledge*’; that is to say, one cannot be told what makes ‘great’ poetry. Rather, the attainment of ‘adequate sympathy’ with ‘the pathetic and the sublime’ aspects of verse requires ‘the exertion of a co-operating *power* in the mind of the Reader’ (81); to adequately ‘create taste is to call forth and bestow [this] power, of which knowledge is the effect’ (82). The mental exertion or ‘passion’ involved in reading is similar, Wordsworth argues, to the effort required to overcome emotional suffering since ‘the connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and *action*, is immediate and inseparable’ and to be moved ‘by a passion, is to be excited, often to external, and always to internal, effort’ (81–2). In other words, by exerting energy to appreciate poetry, readers cultivate the capacity to overcome emotional difficulties: on these terms, poetry makes readers ‘wiser, better, and happier’ (*MY i.*, 150).²²

Affinities between Wordsworth’s ‘Essay, Supplementary’ (which appeared within a publication dedicated to Beaumont) and Reynolds’s *Discourses* were first noted by Martha Hale Shackford.²³ Yet a significant, unexplored similarity lies in Reynolds’s conception of how taste is acquired and what should happen when the best models of art are experienced. For Reynolds, the regeneration of taste and its accompanying moral transformation takes place when the spectator cultivates interior resources: ‘whatever teaches us to look for happiness *within ourselves*, must advance in some measure the dignity of our nature’ (II. ix. 6) [my italics]. This appeal to interior exertion matches the particular type of ‘mental labour’

Reynolds encourages his students to practise (I. iv. 29). In order to distinguish artistic industry from lower forms of merely physical work, he suggests that the ‘real’ labour the artist must perform ‘is not the industry of the *hands*, but of the *mind*’ (I. vii. 189). When Wordsworth praises Reynolds’s ‘deep conviction of the necessity of unwearied labour and diligence’, I suggest he recognizes the non-physical character of that labour.²⁴

Approximately five weeks after the ‘Essay, Supplementary’ appeared in 1815, Wordsworth published a poem he had been withholding from the press since 1808.²⁵ *The White Doe of Rylstone; or The Fate of the Nortons* is a meditation on the relative value of physical and non-physical activity, and a concerted attempt to regenerate the public taste for romance. The poem challenged contemporary readers by subverting the generic expectations it establishes. The medieval setting, the apparatus of minstrelsy, and the appropriation of a tale based on local legend encourage the reader to expect an exciting story in the style of Walter Scott. But *The White Doe* does not centre on the violent events of Richard Norton’s uprising against Elizabeth I; instead the focus is on Emily Norton’s emotional turmoil and struggle to overcome grief and desolation following the deaths of her father and brothers. As the poem withholds thrilling action, readers were (understandably) confused; yet Wordsworth defiantly explained that ‘it is false and too ridiculous to be dwelt on for a moment’ that the ‘principal characters [do] nothing’ (*MY i.*, 222). The contrast between popular romance narratives (such as Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel*) and *The White Doe* highlights Wordsworth’s placement of ‘mental labour’ above physical action and incident. The poem subordinates visible events and icons including Norton’s banner (which might be captured by a painter) in favour of Emily’s fortitude and faith, which cannot be seen. With the help of the doe, Emily exemplifies the interior exertion necessary to surmount suffering. In the context of the ‘Essay, Supplementary’—which effectively prepares readers to approach *The White Doe*—Emily’s emotional struggle is tantamount to that required to develop aesthetic taste.²⁶

Peter Manning astutely describes *The White Doe* as an attempt to shift a narrative form as far as possible towards lyric.²⁷ Yet as Wordsworth internalizes the activity of romance, he negotiates a specific distinction between poetry and painting foregrounded by Reynolds: ‘Poetry operates by raising our curiosity, engaging the mind by degrees to take an interest in the event, keeping the event suspended, and surprising at last with an unexpected catastrophe’, whereas the ‘Painter’s art is more confined, and has nothing ... equivalent to, this power and advantage of leading the mind on’ (I. viii. 247). Reynolds thus suggests that the capacity for narrative movement, suspense, and surprise—which characterizes Scott’s romances—separates poetry from the stasis of painting. *The White Doe*, however, avoids these aspects of narrative.²⁸ In a letter to Coleridge of April 1808, Wordsworth explains that ‘there [is] nothing in [the poem] to excite *curiosity* ... the main *catastrophe* [is] not a material but an intellectual one’ (*MY i.*, 222) [my italics].²⁹ While Wordsworth diminishes the value of visual events and images, he simultaneously pushes *The White Doe* as far as possible towards the stillness of a picture; indeed, he refers to the poem as a ‘picture’ in this letter to Coleridge. Alarmed at Charles Lamb’s lack of appreciation for the (as yet unpublished) poem, Wordsworth exclaims:

Let Lamb learn to be ashamed of himself in not taking some pleasure in the contemplation of this picture, which supposing it to be even but a sketch, is yet sufficiently made out for any man of true power to finish it for himself (*MY i.*, 222).

The metaphor of a sketch is appropriate because in *The White Doe* pictorial stillness is combined with an emphasis on interior activity that is just ‘sufficiently made out’ or hidden beneath the narrative surface.

Talking about poetry in terms of pictures, and particularly in terms of sketching, was not unusual throughout the eighteenth century. Simon Jarvis explains that because ‘painting is widely understood to be a more fully mimetic medium than literature, painterly idioms offer a natural way of talking about what writing cannot exhaustively state and what the reader must bring’.³⁰ A reader has greater opportunity to participate than a spectator and this participation is vitalizing. For example, Joseph Addison notes that well-chosen words give ‘us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves’ and allow the reader to envisage ‘a Scene drawn in stronger Colours, and painted more to the Life in his Imagination’.³¹ Edmund Burke agrees that ‘it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting’ because ‘the most lively and spirited verbal description ... raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea*’.³² Such indistinctness (which Burke associates with the sublime) gives poetry superiority over the clarity of painting by engaging the imagination. However, Burke notes that ‘unfinished sketches of drawing’ approach the power of verbal description by offering the imagination ‘the promise of something more’.³³ Beaumont also asserts (in a letter to Coleridge of August 1803) that sketches invite the participation of the spectator: he was pleased ‘to hear Mr Wordsworth & you liked the sketches [of Applethwaite], rude as they are, but I am confident minds like yours will always be pleased to have much left to the imagination’.³⁴ A sketch, more than a precisely finished painting, resembles poetry in its appeal to the participating mind.

Reynolds agrees that the ‘general ideas’ expressed in sketches ‘correspond very well to the art often used in Poetry’: from ‘a slight undetermined drawing, where the ideas of the composition and character are ... only just touched upon, the imagination supplies more than the painter himself, probably, could produce’ (I. viii. 284). Yet Reynolds has significant reservations about leaving work for the spectator. While acknowledging the value of sketching as a means of trial and improvement, he asserts the ‘evil to be apprehended’ from

‘resting there, and not correcting them afterwards from nature’ (II. xii. 85–6). The notion that sketches bear ‘correcting’ implies the inferiority of the genre and since ‘resting there’ entails neglect of study and industry, this statement is understandable in a lecture delivered to students at the Royal Academy. Reynolds appreciates sketching as a private genre confined to the portfolio; sketches may be viewed, for example, by a spectator who has special knowledge of the artist, but sketching is not an appropriate mode with which to communicate with the public or with posterity because a work that is open to interpretation is also open to misinterpretation.³⁵ In this context, Reynolds declares that the painter ‘is obliged to give a determined form’:

We cannot on this occasion, nor indeed on any other, recommend an undeterminate manner, or vague ideas of any kind, in a complete and finished picture. This notion therefore, of leaving any thing to the imagination, opposes a very fixed and indispensable rule in our art,—that every thing shall be carefully and distinctly expressed, as if the painter knew, with correctness and precision, the exact form and character of whatever is introduced into the picture. This is what with us is called Science, and Learning: which must not be sacrificed and given up for an uncertain and doubtful beauty, which, not naturally belonging to our Art, will probably be sought for without success (I. viii. 285).

The implication is that an artist who presents a sketch to the public as a ‘complete and finished picture’ steps beyond the ‘Science, and Learning’ of painting into the territory of the poet.³⁶

In a Romantic context, where expressivity, spontaneity, and fragmentation are generally celebrated, one might assume that sketching was held in high regard; yet visual and

literary sketches often came with qualifications and (as Richard Sha has shown) the genre seemed well-suited to female artists and writers.³⁷ The advertisement to William Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1783), for example, asserts the 'originality' of the volume but admits the 'sketches were the production of untutored youth' and contain 'irregularities and defects'.³⁸ When William Gilpin refers to his *Observations on the River Wye* (1789) as a 'little work' and 'a hasty sketch', the implication is that picturesque travel narratives are ephemeral and occupy 'an inferior place in the hierarchy of genres'.³⁹ Gilpin's essay on 'The Art of Sketching Landscape' (1792), explains in simple steps how picturesque travellers might produce their own visual sketches. Gilpin places sketching on the level of leisurely amateurism and celebrates the fact that it requires little labour: 'no great degree of accuracy can be expected' because a picturesque sketch 'descends not to the minutiae of objects'.⁴⁰ Given the assertion that adequate sketches are easily 'attainable by a man of business' who 'can hardly expect' to 'excel in *execution*', it is unsurprising that Reynolds disliked Gilpin's essay.⁴¹ John Keats later registers this connection between imprecision, indolence, and the picturesque when he describes Wordsworth's 'Gipsies' as 'a kind of sketchy intellectual Landscape—not a search after Truth'.⁴²

Wordsworth designates several of his own poems as 'sketches' and while these verses do involve some mode of travelling they disrupt associations with dilettantism, nonchalance, and picturesque activity. For example, he rejects the appellation 'Picturesque' for his Alpine topographical poem, *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), because he believes 'the cold rules of painting' stifle the 'emotions which [the Alps] have the irresistible power of communicating'.⁴³ He is unwilling to allow recognizable picturesque patterns to condition the way he experienced the Alps and represented them in his *Sketches*. Again in *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822), Wordsworth modifies the relationship between sketching and travel narratives by presenting a journey that is temporal and imaginative rather than physical; the

sonnets are the fruit of careful historical research and devotion, not snapshots of passing visual impressions.⁴⁴ Wordsworth's reference to *The White Doe of Rylstone* as a 'sketch' (quoted above) might seem conventional given that the poem was inspired by an excursion to Bolton Abbey—a place Wordsworth commends 'to the notice of all lovers of beautiful scenery'—however, as John Ruskin suggests in *Modern Painters*, Wordsworth's appreciation of the scenery at Bolton Abbey is based on a spirit of reverence, not picturesque principles.⁴⁵

With *The White Doe* in particular, Wordsworth indicates the gravity and moral seriousness he attached to 'sketches'. The poem is a quiet celebration of endurance and contemplation which condemns Norton's impetuous rebellion; Wordsworth's chastising tone and assertion that Charles Lamb ought to be 'ashamed' indicates that he measured Lamb's moral rectitude against an ability to appreciate Emily's triumph. Wordsworth applies the term 'sketch' not to denote a provisional or spontaneous surface impression, nor to declare his work defective, preliminary, or fragmentary, but to suggest that the reader must 'finish' the poem by exerting the passionate 'co-operating *power*' he describes in the 'Essay, Supplementary'. In striving to generate this '*power*', the reader makes a creative contribution to the poem and (by a similar process of exertion) becomes 'wiser, better, and happier'.

The connection Wordsworth understood to exist between 'sketching' and the type of interior struggle he celebrates in *The White Doe* and the 'Essay, Supplementary' is evident in 'Old Man Travelling; Animal Tranquillity and Decay, A Sketch', first published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798):

The little hedge-row birds,
That peck along the road, regard him not.
He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression; every limb,

His look and bending figure, all bespeak
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves
 With thought—He is insensibly subdued
 To settled quiet: he is one by whom
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
 Long patience has such mild composure given,
 That patience now doth seem a thing, of which
 He hath no need. He is by nature led
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.
 —I asked him whither he was bound, and what
 The object of his journey; he replied
 “Sir! I am going many miles to take
 “A last leave of my son, a mariner,
 “Who from a sea-fight has been brought to Falmouth,
 “And there is dying in an hospital.”⁴⁶

The poem captures tensions between movement (‘step’, ‘gait’, ‘limb’, ‘move’, ‘moves’) and stillness (‘settled quiet’, ‘patience’, ‘composure’, ‘peace’), between bodily expression and verbal expression, between looking and feeling, between physical wounds (those of the dying mariner) and emotional pain. The old man is introduced via the ‘little hedge-row birds’ that ‘regard him not’; they are not startled by his presence, they do not flinch or fly away, but they do not actively *disregard* him either; that is to say, rather than neglecting him, their ‘Animal Tranquillity’ is in harmony with his outward calmness.

The title 'Old Man Travelling' resembles a caption for a picture. The poem's speaker frames the old man in the landscape and records the compositional harmony of the 'bending figure', perceiving that 'every' feature is united in 'one expression'. In popular landscape art, rustics and vagrants were quintessential picturesque props (and this is the context in which Keats perceived the gipsies in Wordsworth's 'sketchy' poem). Painters such as Salvator Rosa and Gaspard Dughet included rugged figures in their work to evoke melancholy and contemplation, or to give an elegiac colouring to the landscape.⁴⁷ Touring the countryside in pursuit of similar scenes, and filling a sketchbook with them, was a fashionable pastime. In this light, the speaker of 'Old Man Travelling' may be interpreted as a picturesque 'sketcher' and Wordsworth may be seen to capture an instance of visual sketching within a verbal 'Sketch'.

As Alison Byerly notes, the sketch 'became deeply implicated in the life of leisure led by the upper middle class: sketches were material evidence both of the abundant free time ... and the money that was needed to visit exotic and picturesque locales'.⁴⁸ The exasperation with which such 'Tourists' were often perceived is evident in another poem from *Lyrical Ballads*, 'The Brothers', which opens with a Priest expostulating against the idleness and mawkishness of those who 'Sit perch'd with book and pencil on their knee, | And look and scribble, scribble on and look' (7–8).⁴⁹ Produced quickly and according to conventions, the sketches of picturesque tourists (who were outsiders by definition) did not always represent profound or penetrating responses to scenery. In this context, the encounter between a sketcher and an old man is a potential opportunity for Wordsworth to challenge assumptions about the levity of sketching.

The final six lines of 'Old Man Travelling'—in which the man discloses information about his dying son—provide startling narrative detail that is stylistically different from the stillness, subtlety, and linguistic complexity of the previous lines. While Wordsworth's

subtitle denominates the whole poem as ‘A Sketch’, I suggest that the first fourteen lines—which depict the observed scene and which are characterized by indeterminacy—most accurately constitute that ‘Sketch’; Wordsworth’s decision in 1805 to delete the final (conversational) section makes the poem more sketch-like and therefore better suited to revise both Gilpin’s and Reynolds’s conceptions of sketches.

In the opening lines, the old man’s effort only *seems* forgotten and he only *seems* not to require patience; to say he is ‘insensibly subdued’ (that is, unaware of his own state of calm) or that his composure is ‘mild’ might, in fact, imply he is somewhat agitated (that is, only mildly composed). Wordsworth exploits the potential ambiguity of the word ‘hardly’ in the same way: perhaps the man ‘hardly’ feels ‘peace so perfect’ because he is not actually at peace; or, maybe, he ‘hardly feels’ peace, seems to have ‘forgotten’ all ‘effort’, and no longer requires patience because his senses have been numbed by the tragic circumstances. For Reynolds, the inherent ambiguity of sketches contravened the correctness and accuracy required of a serious artist. The unexpected detail given in the final section of ‘Old Man Travelling’ suggests that perhaps Reynolds was right to be wary of ambiguity: suddenly the narrator’s sketch looks potentially misjudged. To treat the *seemingly* tranquil traveller as a quaint picturesque figure that ‘the young behold | With envy’ is to underappreciate the struggle of a grieving man: if the artist had known the full story in advance, perhaps he would have produced a different picture.⁵⁰

From 1805 onwards, however, ‘Old Man Travelling’ becomes a sonnet—a form particularly associated with travelling and sketching—and Wordsworth avoids (in Reynolds’s words) ‘surprising at last with an unexpected catastrophe’ (I. viii. 247).⁵¹ Wordsworth makes the poem more *pictorial* by suppressing the narrative action or surprise—the very quality which, for Reynolds, distinguishes poetry from painting. Yet Wordsworth chooses to rest with ‘an uncertain and doubtful beauty’ (I. viii. 285) by removing lines that help the reader to

understand the sketch. In other words, from 1805 Wordsworth pushes the poem towards pictorial stillness *and* asserts the value of indeterminacy. Without knowledge of the dying mariner, there is nothing to destabilize or detract from the sketcher's observation which, in itself, is acutely powerful precisely because it is open to interpretation.

Sketches, especially those in Gilpin's style, generally elude traces of effort and contemplation. Yet with 'Old Man Travelling', where 'All effort' only *seems* 'forgotten', Wordsworth shifts the literary sketch away from its associations with non-laboriousness, spontaneity, and a fashionable type of leisurely travel, drawing attention instead to 'mental labour'. Wordsworth emphasizes the interior exertion rather than the physical discomfort of the old man, who 'does not move with pain, but moves | With thought'. At the same time (and without the interpretative lead offered in the original *dénouement*), the 'Sketch' invites readers to 'finish' the picture for themselves by using what Wordsworth terms the 'co-operating *power*'. As he explains in the 'Essay, Supplementary', the exercise of such interior '*power*' helps refine readers' taste. While Wordsworth shares Reynolds's belief that the reformation of taste is a long and arduous business, Reynolds does not consider sketches as a worthy contribution to that process. Wordsworth, however, disagrees. His 'Sketch', which both exhibits and demands 'mental labour', is in fact endowed with qualities Joshua Reynolds valued. Aided by the removal of the final lines, Wordsworth elevates the sketch to a new level of dignity and difficulty. On these terms, a Wordsworthian sketch is well-suited to help 'create the taste by which he is to be relished' (*MY i.*, 150).

The Picturesque and Beaumont's 'Sketcheresque'

An artist's sketch might be a preparatory study (a 'cartoon') or it might be a finalized picture that makes a virtue of an easeful indistinct style. Reynolds permitted the former but denounced the latter as an 'evil' that offends against the principles of painting.⁵² As a disciple of Reynolds, Sir George Beaumont placed a high value on practised technique and accuracy, and especially disapproved of imprecision in landscape painting. In a series of letters to William Gilpin of 1801–1802, Beaumont argues that 'the progress of landscape [painting]' is being impeded by 'the great encouragement given to tinted drawings, almost to the exclusion of oil painting'. Tinting is 'certainly inferior' to oil painting but as the technique is 'more easily acquired ... all the rising & promising young men give themselves entirely up to it'. Once habituated to this style, these young artists 'never can paint with any effect in oil, their eyes are so weakened by their tender & delicate water colours, that they shrink from the vigorous tints of oil, & their works are washy & flimsy'.⁵³ This is a specific problem for landscape painting, Beaumont argues, because 'lumpish forms, & counteracting lines' which are 'hardly noticed' in nature 'are truly disgusting' in art; thus, 'the Artist must avail himself of every advantage if he wishes to cope with [nature]—if he attacks her upon equal terms he is sure to be disgracefully vanquished'.⁵⁴ In Beaumont's opinion, landscapists are obliged to smooth out the rough edges of nature; his letters to Gilpin thus applaud the fine lines of Claude Lorrain who 'perhaps is the only painter' who has accurately determined 'every flower, blade of grass, & almost the fibres of the leaves' without being mechanical. In signalling his commitment to Reynoldsian standards of finishing, Beaumont seems to have offended Gilpin, who extolls rough sketching as the most mimetically accurate way to capture landscape.⁵⁵ As he produced paintings associated with Wordsworth's poems, however, Beaumont's thinking about the demerits of sketching began to change.

Wordsworth dedicated the first collected edition of his *Poems* (1815) to Beaumont, '[w]ishing and hoping that this Work, with the embellishments it has received from your

pencil, may survive as a lasting memorial of a friendship, which I reckon among the blessings of my life'.⁵⁶ In offering the combination of his poetic 'Work' and Beaumont's artistic 'embellishments' as a memorial of such a valuable friendship, Wordsworth emphasizes the significance of the frontispieces Beaumont contributed to the volumes. Engravings of Beaumont's paintings for 'Lucy Gray' and 'Peele Castle in a Storm' appeared as frontispieces to the 1815 edition and Beaumont also provided images for *The White Doe*, *Peter Bell* (1819), and all four of the volumes Wordsworth published in 1820.⁵⁷

The painting for *The White Doe* resulted from a challenge Wordsworth issued to Beaumont in 1808. Wordsworth was sure Beaumont would be able to extract from the poem the 'one situation' which 'would furnish as fine a subject for a Picture as anything I remember in Poetry antient or modern'; he believed that he 'need not mention what it is; as when you [Sir George] read the Poem you cannot miss it' (*MY i.*, 196). Wordsworth was confident because he knew Beaumont to be an attentive reader, but this confidence also turned on his awareness that Beaumont was steeped in Reynolds's teaching. The passage Wordsworth had in mind is from Canto 1 where the doe appears beneath 'a delicate shadow' cast by the abbey ruins.⁵⁸ The interplay of light and shadow described in this passage is an example of chiaroscuro, a method of organizing paintings favoured by Reynolds.⁵⁹ Wordsworth incorporated this particularly Reynoldsian scene into *The White Doe* knowing that it would strike Beaumont's attention. And it did. When Beaumont's painting of this image appeared as the poem's frontispiece in 1815, it aptly announced the Reynoldsian concepts at the heart of Wordsworth's endeavour. The pictorial stillness of the poem and Emily's example of endurance would, Wordsworth hoped, raise the spirits and refine the taste of his readers.

While Beaumont's contribution to Wordsworth's *White Doe* was underpinned by their shared appreciation of Reynolds's principles, his pictorial responses to other poems suggest

he perceived those poems as metaphorical ‘sketches’ that the reader might ‘finish’. In July 1814, Beaumont wrote:

If I have time I may perhaps be able to sketch some other subjects for the Poems—but I cannot promise myself that pleasure, for I am a poor hand at any thing which does not rise spontaneously—but I shall stand a better chance if I do not confine myself to subjects actual *in* the Poems—but to such as are rural & in harmony with them (WLL/47).

Beaumont’s sketches (which in this instance are preliminary studies) will ‘rise spontaneously’ from reflection; that is to say, they are not direct illustrations of the poetry but imaginative responses to it.⁶⁰ Illustrations exist for clarification and elucidation whereas Beaumont’s images are additive. The finished paintings for ‘The Thorn’ and *Peter Bell* exemplify this point. In the case of ‘The Thorn’, Beaumont extended the story of Martha Ray by painting her as an ‘old woman’, thinking that ‘her being supposed to have persevered in this practice [of visiting the grave of her infant] for a long course of years, rather added to the interest of the story’ (WLL/17). Similarly, the painting for *Peter Bell* ‘does not relate to any thing *in* the poem but to the state of the Hero afterwards’ (WLL/46); Beaumont suggested that rather than a frontispiece it should be a ‘tailpiece’ with a caption stating that it represents Peter ‘meditating after the close of the poem’ (WLL/48). The implication is that Beaumont exerted a ‘co-operating *power*’: he reflected on Peter’s moral transformation and metaphorically ‘finished’ the narrative. In effect, by extending the narrative action, Beaumont performed what Reynolds described as the *poetic* work of ‘leading the mind on’ (I. viii. 247). The image serves as a model for how other readers might similarly contemplate and complete what they have read.⁶¹ The paintings for ‘The Thorn’ and *Peter Bell* are not sketchy in style

but they are worthy ‘embellishments’ of Wordsworth’s ‘Work’ because they amplify the poet’s belief (asserted most forcefully in his literary ‘sketches’) that reading is itself a mode of collaboration.

Following a trip to Switzerland in 1820, however, Beaumont began to develop a more imprecise style of landscape painting, admitting ‘that by a little judicious management I might possibly overturn my own system’:

you must know I had formed a sort of *conchetto*, namely that Switzerland was more sketcheresque than picturesque & there *is* something in the notion, for the materials however sublime in reality, are certainly very heterogeneous ... in a slight sketch, if the mind by intelligent touches not too decisive, is led on truly to a certain point, the imagination will finish the picture to its own satisfaction but when white now blue sky, & black firs are too rigidly condensed, in all the grossness & materialism of oil, I never yet saw the result satisfactory (WLL/67).⁶²

The style of painting Beaumont terms ‘sketcheresque’ (which rejects ‘the grossness & materialism of oil’) is precisely that which he described in letters to Gilpin of 1801 and 1802 as ‘certainly inferior’ and ‘truly disgusting’, while the notion that the spectator might ‘finish the picture’ breaches Reynolds’s maxim regarding imprecision. This striking coinage also suggests that Beaumont aimed to distinguish his work from ‘picturesque’ art.⁶³ As Wordsworth elevated the dignity of the literary ‘sketch’, Beaumont’s ‘sketcheresque’ painting may be interpreted as an attempt to renovate the ‘picturesque’ by emphasizing that which Wordsworth considered to be excluded or devalued by many landscape connoisseurs.

When Wordsworth denounced the picturesque as ‘a strong infection of the age’ he was rejecting versions of picturesque aesthetics that prioritize visual, surface-level

appearances (form, texture, and so on), yet he adopted and extended those aspects of the picturesque that involve non-visual, imaginative, and affective responses to landscapes.⁶⁴ In ‘The Ruined Cottage’, for example, the Pedlar teaches that Margaret’s dwelling should not be valued merely for its ruggedness; instead the speaker is encouraged to reflect on Margaret’s sorrow and to appreciate her dilapidated cottage as an emblem of the consolatory, regenerative power of nature.

Wordsworth also objected to the imposition of a picturesque system of taste according to which natural scenery is judged as if it were a painting. English landscapists often arranged their paintings according to the model set by Claude Lorrain and these patterns also infiltrated the structure of descriptive poetry, the most influential example of which was James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1730). Subsequently, amongst connoisseurs, there developed a habit of perceiving landscapes as if arranged according to this Claudian model.⁶⁵ For Richard Payne Knight, for instance, appreciation of natural scenery is proportional to knowledge of landscape painting and topographical poetry. The ability to recognize fashionable painterly or poetic compositional patterns increases the pleasure one receives from discerning such patterns in nature: ‘The spectator’, writes Knight, ‘having his mind enriched with the embellishments of the painter and the poet, applies them, by the spontaneous association of ideas, to the natural objects presented to his eye’.⁶⁶ This is the practice satirized by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, where Catherine Morland is considered ironically to be without ‘natural taste’ until she has been instructed in picturesque aesthetics. Austen explains that it was deemed tasteful to view a landscape ‘with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing’ and to then decide ‘on its capability of being formed into pictures’.⁶⁷ On this model, however, an untutored rustic like Wordsworth’s shepherd Michael could not fully appreciate natural scenery; yet Michael, who suffered heartbreak at the loss of his son, values the landscape

intensely. As Wordsworth explains in a letter to Charles James Fox, ‘men who do not wear fine cloaths can feel deeply’.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, Wordsworth asserted that poetic taste ‘can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition’⁶⁹ and he was aware that the appreciation of pictorial art involved particular knowledge and frames of reference. He wished ‘most heartily’ for ‘an opportunity of seeing’ Beaumont’s collection of pictures ‘and some others in town ... to have pointed out to me some of those finer and peculiar beauties of Painting which I am afraid I shall never have occasions of becoming sufficiently familiar with pictures to discover of myself’.⁷⁰ And yet Coleridge raises a pertinent point: having learned from Beaumont ‘how to look at a picture judiciously’ and after being granted access to Beaumont’s and John Julian Angerstein’s collections, Coleridge pondered in his notebook the ‘causes that make certain appearances more beautiful, at least more interesting, in a Picture than in Nature/ & may not Knowledge & Taste & Feeling produce these in Nature, & make a wise man, independent of Raphael, Rembrandt, & Wealth?/’.⁷¹ If access to great examples of visual art is necessary to cultivate proper appreciation of the ‘picturesque’ aspects of nature, then the acquisition of taste requires wealth and opportunity.

Yet Wordsworth’s scheme to regenerate the national taste, as expressed in the ‘Essay, Supplementary’ and attempted in *The White Doe*, hinges on the exertion of inner resources. Taste is refined through the interior energy expended when humans experience and overcome great trials or suffering, not when they have opportunities to view ‘pleasing’ (and expensive) paintings. Wordsworth objects to versions of the picturesque that impose a system of taste, leaving little room for personal, emotive responses such as those of Michael. But more seriously, models of the picturesque which measure taste against the *pleasure* received from

familiarity with landscape art distort the primacy given by Reynolds to ‘mental labour’ and to moral and emotional regeneration.

Wordsworth’s objections to picturesque theories in which ‘the eye was master of the heart’⁷² become clearer in light of his thinking about taste and the particular qualities he attached to ‘sketches’ such as *The White Doe* and ‘Old Man Travelling’. While picturesque theorists such as Gilpin, Price, and Knight looked to Reynolds for authority, they drifted away from Sir Joshua’s emphasis on ‘whatever teaches us to look for happiness within ourselves’.⁷³ Wordsworth, by contrast, shares Reynolds’s focus on the importance of inner resources and hard struggles. Beaumont’s rejection of the picturesque in favour of a ‘sketcheresque’ style of painting, which the spectator must ‘finish’, is appropriate and consistent with his admiration for Reynolds insofar as it reincorporates into landscape art the Reynoldsian ideas Wordsworth had infused into his poetic ‘sketches’. Reynolds could not allow imprecise sketches to form part of his scheme to refine the nation’s taste, but once Wordsworth had elevated that mode Beaumont became open to its possibilities. Beaumont’s ‘sketcheresque’ painting may be seen, then, to exemplify the particular Reynoldsian principles that are crystallized in a Wordsworthian sketch.

In a letter of December 1817, Beaumont echoed a phrase Wordsworth used in the dedication for *Poems* (1815): stating that Wordsworth’s friendship was ‘amongst the prime blessings of [his] life’, Beaumont wrote that ‘to you [Wordsworth] I am principally beholden for having my eyes [turned] inwardly to my mind’ (WLL/62). It would be inaccurate, however, to conclude that Beaumont’s ‘sketcheresque’ style indicates a straightforward renunciation of Reynolds’s teachings under Wordsworth’s influence. Beaumont capitulated to his friend no more than Wordsworth had done in writing the inscription for the cenotaph memorializing Sir Joshua at Coleorton. Wordsworth’s affinity with Reynolds helped secure

Beaumont's admiration from the start and Reynolds's principles remained central to the development of a mutually enriching collaborative exchange.

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¹ 'Written at the Request of Sir George Beaumont, Bart. and in his Name', lines 13–18, in *Shorter Poems, 1807–1820*, ed. Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca and London, 1989), 106. Quotation is taken from 'Reading Text 4' which appeared in *Poems* (1815).

² Constable's painting of the Coleorton 'Cenotaph to the Memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds' is in the National Gallery.

³ David Blayney Brown, 'Sir George Beaumont as Collector and Connoisseur', in Felicity Owen and David Blayney Brown (eds.), *"Noble and Patriotic": The Beaumont Gift 1828* (London, 1988), 17 and 21.

⁴ One of Wordsworth's earliest poems, 'Anacreon Imitated' (1786), possibly a Hawkshead School exercise, calls on Reynolds as the 'best of painters' to paint an absent mistress. See *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785–1797*, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London, 1997), 364–8.

⁵ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, ed. Robert Woof (Grasmere, 2004; repr. 2007), 207.

⁶ *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. Edmond Malone, 3 vols. (London, 1801), I, viii, 285. Subsequent parenthetical references give volume, discourse, and page numbers.

⁷ The word 'aesthetics' emerged in Germany after Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762) used it to designate knowledge based on sense perception. In Britain, Addison's essays on the 'Pleasures of the Imagination', Burke's formulation of the sublime and beautiful, Reynolds's *Discourses*, the culture of the picturesque, and Coleridge's writings helped give birth to the discipline that is now called 'philosophical aesthetics'. In the period presently under discussion, British writers used the word 'taste' to signify 'the affective faculty and the species of knowledge derived from it': Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge, 2013), 1–5 (2).

⁸ James Scoggins noted that Reynolds's influence on Wordsworth '[had] not been sufficiently emphasized' in *Imagination and Fancy: Complementary Modes in the Poetry of William Wordsworth* (Lincoln, 1966), 154 note

27. Subsequently, John L. Mahoney identified in Reynolds's later *Discourses* a 'new way of talking about the psychological and moral force of art ... that anticipates Wordsworth' and argues that 'there is in Wordsworth's critical writings a certain general awareness of the liberal spirit of the later Reynolds': see 'Reynolds and Wordsworth: the Development of a Post-Enlightenment Aesthetic', *European Romantic Review*, 3 (1992), 147–58 (155 and 147–8). Peter Simonsen argues that Reynolds's emphasis on the permanence and durability of art influenced Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanzas' in *Wordsworth and the Word-Preserving Arts* (Basingstoke, 2007), 87–92.

⁹ Blake disagreed: 'I say taste & genius are not teachable or acquirable but are born with us. Reynolds says the contrary'. Frederick W. Hilles compares Blake's marginalia to the *Discourses* with that of Hazlitt and Haydon in 'Reynolds among the Romantics', in Frank Brady, John Palmer, and Martin Price (eds.), *Literary Theory and Structure: Essays in Honor of William K. Wimsatt* (New Haven and London, 1973), 267–83 (280).

¹⁰ *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1974), I, 116–17.

¹¹ *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1956–71), II (1956), 957. The Beaumonts were introduced to *Lyrical Ballads* by Uvedale Price in the summer of 1801. In a letter to Beaumont of 18 March 1815, Price recalls that they were immediately 'inspired' by 'The Thorn': New York, Morgan Library, Misc. English Coleorton Papers, MA 1581 (Price) 76. (Hereafter 'Coleorton Papers'.)

¹² Beaumont to Coleridge, August 1803, Coleorton Papers, MA 1857.6. Beaumont quotes from Joseph Addison's *Letter to Italy*. Wordsworth accepted the land but not the invitation to build on it.

¹³ Ibid. Wilhelmina L. Hotchkiss highlights the significance of Beaumont's love of the Lakes in 'Coleridge, Beaumont, and the Wordsworthian Claims for Place', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 21 (1990), 51–5.

¹⁴ *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Middle Years, part I*, ed. Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1969), 145–6. (Hereafter *MY i.*) Lady Beaumont's letter is not extant.

¹⁵ *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven and London, 1986), 70. These ideas about the moral function of art did not originate with Reynolds. The *Discourses* express ideas that had been dominant for three hundred years, yet the similarity between Wordsworth's and Reynolds's phraseology is striking. Robert R. Wark states the difficulty involved in discovering sources for Reynolds's particular ideas: see *Discourses on Art* (New Haven and London, 1997), xxi. Reynolds's conception of taste and virtue is very different, however, from Burke's system in which taste is connected with sensation and judgment, not morality.

Burke's 'Introduction on Taste' was added to the second edition of his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759).

¹⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Eng. Misc. c. 389, fol. 46. (Hereafter 'Eng. Misc.')

The *Discourses* assert that there is no substitute for sustained study of 'the works of those who have stood the test of ages' (I. ii. 30).

¹⁷ *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years*, ed. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967), 491. (Hereafter *EY*). Already acquainted with several of the *Discourses*, Wordsworth had read them all in Malone's edition by 25 December 1804: *EY*, 517.

¹⁸ Lady Beaumont's transcription of this significant letter is among the Beaumonts' letters to the Wordsworths: Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, WLL/Beaumont, George/23. (Hereafter WLL.) All quotation of this sequence appears by permission of The Wordsworth Trust.

¹⁹ Beaumont to Ann Bowles (daughter of his friend Oldfield Bowles), 18 October 1807: Winchester, Hampshire Records Office, Wickham Family Papers (49038), 38M49/C6/25/5. Beaumont repeats this phrase again in a letter to Wordsworth of June 1814 (WLL/45) where he perceives that 'the film which has so long blinded the public & prevented them being sensible of your excellence is gradually dissolving—and I have no doubt you will soon have "created the taste by which you are to be relished["]'.

²⁰ Blayney Brown, 'Collector and Connoisseur', 21.

²¹ *Prose Works*, III, 80.

²² Wordsworth wished his poems to be esteemed for 'the powers of the mind [they] call forth, and the energies they presuppose and excite': *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith Morley, 3 vols. (London, 1938), I, 89.

²³ *Wordsworth's Interest in Painters and Pictures* (Wellesley, 1945), 36–7.

²⁴ *EY*, 491. Richard C. Sha emphasizes the class division implied by Reynolds's term 'mental labour'. Distinct from physical labour, the artist's 'sweat and tears become transmogrified into the aesthetic by taste and by the ability to acknowledge one's place in the social and painterly hierarchy': *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia, 1998), 47. As I will suggest, however, Wordsworth's concept of 'mental labour' overleaps class boundaries.

²⁵ Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years, 1800–1815* (Cambridge MA, 1975), 599 and 606.

²⁶ Wordsworth compares arduous poetic interpretation to the experience of grief in the dedicatory epistle to *The White Doe*, ‘In trellis’d shed’.

²⁷ ‘*The White Doe of Rylstone* and Later Narrative Poems’, in Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth* (Oxford, 2015), 270.

²⁸ Wordsworth’s attempt to capture the stasis of plastic art within a linear poem is an example of what Murray Krieger describes as ‘the ekphrastic principle’. See ‘The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited’, in Murray Krieger (ed.), *The Play and Place of Criticism* (Baltimore, 1967), 105–28. This is separate from pure ekphrasis in which, according to James Heffernan, ‘language releases a narrative impulse which graphic art restricts’. See ‘Ekphrasis and Representation’, *English Literary History*, 22 (1991), 297–316 (302).

²⁹ Wordsworth restated this point in 1843: Sir Walter ‘[pursued] action, presenting various turns of fortune, to some outstanding point on which the mind might rest as a termination or catastrophe. The course I attempted to pursue is entirely different. Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in “the White Doe” fails, so far as its object is external and substantial. So far as it is moral & spiritual it succeeds’. See *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (London, 1993), 32–3.

³⁰ ‘Criticism, Taste, Aesthetics’, in Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740–1830* (Cambridge, 2004), 37.

³¹ No. 416, 27 June 1712, *The Spectator*, 5 vols. ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965; revised 1987), III, 560.

³² *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Paul Guyer (Oxford, 2015), 49.

³³ *Ibid.*, 63. Addison notes that the strategy of ‘[letting] us see just so much as will naturally lead the Imagination into all the parts that lie conceal’d’ is ‘much in use among the Poets, and is particularly practis’d by Virgil’. The strategy is effective because ‘the Mind, which is always delighted with its own Discoveries, only takes the hint from the Poet, and seems to work out the rest by the strength of her own faculties’. See Addison, ‘An Essay on the Georgics’ in *The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 5: Poems; The Works of Virgil in English; 1697*, ed. William Frost and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley, 2015), 147–8.

³⁴ Coleorton Papers, MA 1857.15.

³⁵ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 112–14. Reynolds produced sketches of paintings *after* they were completed to keep a record of work he had sold.

³⁶ Barrell explains that ‘of two paintings by van Dyck, which Reynolds saw in Brussels, he notes that “they are slightly painted, and certainly not intended for public pictures”’: *ibid.*, 121.

³⁷ The three central chapters of Sha’s *Visual and Verbal Sketch* assemble a number of examples of (largely neglected) female artists and writers who used the term ‘sketch’ to qualify and even justify their productions. Restricted to this slight, domestic genre, women were excluded from the serious male realm of painting.

³⁸ ‘ADVERTISEMENT’, *Poetical Sketches* (London, 1783).

³⁹ Wendelin Guentner, ‘The Sketch as Literary Metaphor: The British Romantic Travel Narrative’, *European Romantic Review*, 7 (1997), 125–33 (125). Guentner’s ‘British Aesthetic Discourse, 1780–1830, the Sketch, the *Non Finito*, and the Imagination’, *Art Journal*, 52, no.2 (1993), 40–7 provides extensive context for her later discussion of travel narratives.

⁴⁰ *Three Essays; On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: To Which Is Added a Poem, on Landscape Painting* (1792; 3rd edn, London, 1808), 87.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89–90. Gilpin sent his *Three Essays* to Reynolds in 1776. Reynolds’s objections led Gilpin to delay publication for sixteen years (Sha, *Visual and Verbal*, 54). Constable attempted to close the gap between sketching and finished painting with his *plein-air* sketches. Suzanne Stewart interprets the spontaneous recording of colour and light in Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals in the context of Constable’s style in “‘The Eye it Cannot Choose but See’: Dorothy Wordsworth, John Constable, and the Plein-Air Sketch”, *English Studies*, 92 (2011), 405–31.

⁴² Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 28–30 October 1817, *The Letters of John Keats: 1814–1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge MA, 1958), 174.

⁴³ *Descriptive Sketches*, ed. Eric Birdsall (Ithaca and London, 1984), 72.

⁴⁴ In 1827 Wordsworth changed the title *Ecclesiastical Sketches* to *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*.

⁴⁵ *The White Doe of Rylstone; or The Fate of the Nortons*, ed. Kristine Dugas (Ithaca and London, 1988), 164. In volume IV, chapter xvi of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin suggests that Turner’s painting of Bolton Abbey captures the ‘awe, and noble mingling of mountain strength with religious fear’ contained in Wordsworth’s poem. See *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London, 1903–12), vi, 305 and Dinah Birch, ‘Elegiac Voices: Wordsworth, Turner and Ruskin’, *RES*, 50 (1999), 332–44 (338–9).

⁴⁶ *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London, 1992), 110. After 1798 the title became ‘Animal Tranquillity and Decay, A Sketch’; the subtitle ‘A Sketch’ was removed in 1845.

⁴⁷ John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore and London, 1976), 1–9.

⁴⁸ ‘Effortless Art: The Sketch in Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature’, *Criticism*, 41 (1999), 349–64 (352).

⁴⁹ *Lyrical Ballads*, 142.

⁵⁰ In this light, the sketcher resembles other insensitive narrators found elsewhere in *Lyrical Ballads* (such as in ‘Simon Lee’, ‘We Are Seven’, or ‘The Thorn’).

⁵¹ Daniel Robinson notes the connection between travel narratives, sketching, and sonnets in ‘The River Duddon and Wordsworth, Sonneteer’, in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, 296. William Lisle Bowles’s *Fourteen Sonnets Written Chiefly on Picturesque Spots during a Journey* (1789) is a pertinent example.

⁵² Reynolds’s appreciation for the work of Thomas Gainsborough is perhaps an exception, as explained in Barrell, *Political Theory*, 120.

⁵³ Eng. Misc. c. 389, fol. 40–1 (March 1802).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 26–7 (15 June 1801).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 42–3 (27 June 1802). ‘I confess your letter has given me much uneasiness—why my dear sir should my opinion of Claude offend your principles or practice’: fol. 52 (6 December 1802).

⁵⁶ *Prose Works*, III, 17–18.

⁵⁷ Mark L. Reed, *A Bibliography of William Wordsworth, 1787–1930*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2013), I, 39, 43, 52, 60–2.

⁵⁸ The passage became lines 89–101 in the 1815 edition: ‘Now doth a delicate shadow fall...’ (see *MY i.*, 221).

⁵⁹ Norma S. Davis, ‘Poet and Painter: Beaumont’s Illustrations in the Poetry of William Wordsworth’, in Frederick Burwick and Jürgen Klein (eds.), *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany* (Amsterdam, 1996), 191–201 (197).

⁶⁰ Peter J. Manning explores Wordsworth’s objections to illustration in ‘Wordsworth’s “Illustrated Books and Newspapers” and Media of the City’, in Larry H. Peer (ed.) *Romanticism and the City*, (New York, 2011), 223–40. Manning’s conclusions about Wordsworth’s elevation of ‘sustained inwardness’ over ‘evidence visible’ and the responsiveness of the reader/viewer, support my interpretation of Beaumont’s ‘embellishments’.

⁶¹ The image in fact appeared as a frontispiece.

⁶² I use this passage to explore how Beaumont's relationship with Coleridge differed from that with Wordsworth in 'Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Sir George Beaumont: Collaboration and the "Sketcheresque"', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 49 (2017), 35–43.

⁶³ Sir George proof-read drafts of Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794) which, Price says, 'includes all I have said on prospects & on views down steep hills on both of which I am happy to find how well we agree': 28 November 1794, Coleorton Papers, MA 1581 (Price) 1.

⁶⁴ *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols. (Ithaca and London, 1991), I, book XI, line 156. A recent study of Gilpin's manuscripts reveals the extent to which he was concerned with layers of human history and valued emotive responses to scenery: Zoë Kinsley, 'William Gilpin at the Coast: A New Perspective on Picturesque Travel Writing', *RES*, 68 (2017), 322–41. Nicola Trott explains the common ground between Wordsworth and Gilpin in terms of affective aspects of the picturesque in 'Wordsworth and the Picturesque: a strong infection of the age', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 18 (1987), 114–21 as does Charles Kostelnik, 'Wordsworth, Ruins, and the Aesthetics of Decay', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 19 (1988), 20–8.

⁶⁵ John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730–1840* (London, 1972), 6–13. A tinted Claude Glass would help make a landscape appear more like a painting.

⁶⁶ *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (2nd edn, London, 1805), 154.

⁶⁷ *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Barbara M. Benedict and Deidre Le Faye (Cambridge, 2006), 111–12. Austen may be punning on the name of the landscape gardener Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

⁶⁸ *EY*, 315.

⁶⁹ *Prose Works*, I, 116.

⁷⁰ *EY*, 517.

⁷¹ *Collected Letters of STC*, II, 1063; *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1794–1804*, vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, 1957), entry 1755. See Carl Woodring, 'What Coleridge Thought of Pictures', in Karl Kroeber and William Walling (eds.), *Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities* (London and New Haven, 1978), 99.

⁷² *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, XI, 172.

⁷³ Price proclaims Reynolds's *Discourses* as 'the most original and impressive work that ever was published on his, or possibly any other art': *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794; 2nd edn, London, 1796), 185. Gilpin seeks Reynolds's approval of his 'Essay on Picturesque Beauty': see *Three Essays*, 33.